

***THE ANDROMACHIAD***

**An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)**

**by**

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## ABSTRACT

Although tales such as the *Iliad* and *Aeneid* are thousands of years old, their characters continue to live on through modern retellings. This thesis, which contains the foundations of a novel prospectively entitled *The Andromachiad*, compiles the story of the classical character Andromache by looking at the texts she appears in. In-depth analysis of ancient works *Andromache*, the *Iliad*, and the *Aeneid*, coupled with thorough readings of modern novels such as *Song of Achilles*, *Circe*, *Lavinia*, and *The Penelopiad*, allow for the development of a complex and thorough narrative. Six completed chapters and one prospective draft provide a voice for and imagine the life of Andromache.

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## PROCESS ANALYSIS STATEMENT

### Introduction

For my Honors thesis I have built the foundation of a novel that gives voice to Andromache, wife of Trojan Hector from Homer's *Iliad*. I chose to develop a novel for my thesis because it combines my two areas of study, classical cultures and creative writing. While I did hope to improve my writing and research skills, I was most interested in furthering my ability to develop a larger writing project and learning what tactics worked best for me.

My specific objectives were to practice and improve upon my skills in writing on a schedule, incorporating research, and editing. I also aimed to hone my in-depth character development skills through the intensive study of one single individual, Andromache.

My thesis contains seven individual scenes chronicling different important moments in Andromache's life, including her conversation with Hector on the walls of Troy and her encounter with Aeneas later on. I originally planned to only write three scenes -- these two along with the death of Hector, but along the way I found other moments I also wished to flesh out and include. The thesis also includes an outline detailing where this project might go in the future were I to develop it into a full novel.

### Background/Conception

I knew early on that I wanted to write something for my thesis; in fact, for more than a year I had it in my head that I would be writing a novel not about Andromache but Dido, the unhappy queen of Carthage. The *Aeneid* was my introduction to epic poetry and to this day holds a special place in my heart. Dido, in particular, stood out to me in my first reading of the *Aeneid* (sometime back in high school) for her complexity; it was easy to write her off as crazy or

irrational, but I knew there was something more there. I grappled with my beliefs about her for years: was she truly insane? Was she some metaphor for the irrationality of love? Simply a pawn in the gods' games?

I loved her because she was flawed, but most of her flaws were left vague enough for further exploration. There was a story to tell, I was sure of it. And so my interest spread to other flawed women of ancient legend: the beautiful Helen, who often bears too much blame for the Trojan War, and Medea, who - to be fair - *did* murder her children, but is still a tragically complex woman. My interests are clearly not only held by me alone, as seen in the recently published novel *Circe*, which provided much inspiration for my own work.

But I didn't settle on Dido, or Helen, or Medea, all of whom deserve novels written about them as well. It happened to be a rereading of the *Aeneid* that brought me to Andromache: book III, in particular. Either I'd never read this exact scene before, or just skimmed it in the past, but I became stuck on the brief moment that Aeneas runs into Andromache and her husband, Helenus, in their new city.

Hers was a story I'd never thought much about when I read the *Iliad*: it was sad, just as the stories of all the other women - the stories of everyone, really - were, and it hadn't stood out to me until that moment. But here her story was, carried on years later by another writer. Virgil found something in her story that spoke to him, and continued it. He gave her a voice she hadn't had before.

Now I was onto something! The same interest I'd felt in Dido years ago was sparked again in this new character. Each new fact I learned about Andromache was more tragic than the last, and my heart broke for her. Although her story has been told in patchwork bits in myriad places, from the *Iliad* to the *Little Iliad* to Euripides' *Andromache* to, of course, the *Aeneid*,

artists have been piecing together her tale for centuries. There was a glue missing, though; Andromache did not have a single unified voice. Although her story has been told in many different ways, she's never told it herself. This is a voice I felt she deserved to have, and a story I needed to tell for her.

## **Goals**

My intent with this project was to combine my two separate areas of study into one project that allowed me to practice all of my strengths together, rather than separately. This project is a culmination of my interests and academic experiences, leaning heavily on my background in classics and interest in historical research. It also pulls in my minor in creative writing, and past experience developing novel-length projects.

My greatest challenge when writing past novels was not the original drafting moments of spewing words out onto the page, but the editing and perfecting. I have a knack for starting writing projects, but I hate finishing them; I believe there's a fear of declaring something as final, and accepting it as being as good as it can be. If a piece is called a draft, it can be bad and I can blame that on its draft-iness. But once I say it's complete, it simply is what it is. If it's bad, it's bad, and I can't blame that on it being a draft or on anything else. I'm sure I'm not the first or last writer to hold this insecurity, but I was aware it was an insecurity. I needed to push through sooner or later.

Of course this isn't a full novel yet, but I proceeded past the primary stages of drafting into the realm of editing and finalization I have feared for so long. I found myself fighting the urge to put chapters away and never look at them again, instead forcing myself to return once more and continue to hone in on my language and content.

A broad goal was to discover more about my writing process and what does and doesn't work for my own habits. In the past I have tried writing novels in many different ways -- beginning with a complete outline, beginning with no outline whatsoever, and everything else in between. For this project I found myself somewhere in between. I had a general idea of which scenes I wanted to include, and began with the ones that interested me most.

## **Research Process**

My research process was divided into three stages: reading similar works, gathering primary sources, and consulting with my classics professors for additional assistance and advice. I chose to start with similar works rather than primary sources because I already knew which ancient texts I would be using as well as their content. Reading through other novels in the same genre also built up inspiration early on and led to realizations about what I liked and disliked in retellings of these stories.

The similar works I approached were Madeline Miller's *The Song of Achilles* and *Circe*, Ursula K. Le Guin's *Lavinia*, and Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad*. *The Song of Achilles* was the novel that originally sparked my interest in the idea of adding a modern spin on an ancient character's story, and *Lavinia* was my second read that sent me deeper into the rabbit hole.

I then gathered my primary sources, which included Homer's *Iliad*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Euripides' *Andromache*, and the *Little Iliad*. I had already read the *Iliad* and *Aeneid* several times, and felt comfortable with my understanding of them. These two were the ones I leaned on most heavily and felt I got the most out of. The other two were new to me before I began this project.

I found much of the research more difficult than I originally expected. Andromache's story is scattered across so many primary sources that it became challenging to piece the whole tale together. I could not find any cohesive secondary sources that looked at her life in-depth - there is shockingly little literature out there on her in general! - which meant that I was on my own.

As a result of this, I found myself having to backtrack from time to time when I wrote something based on what I knew, found new information, and had to figure out how I could work it in. For example, I had no idea that Andromache had a son by Pyrrhus until I was deep into the project. I was excited to find that out and include it, because it added a new layer of depth and conflict, but I realized there was a lot I didn't know.

## **Writing Process**

I began writing only after my preliminary round of research, in which I read through similar works and gathered the scenes I would pull from primary works. I believe doing this gave me the confidence I needed to finally start writing, because I understood how others wrote stories such as this and I thoroughly understood the character I was writing about. However, looking back I wish I had spent even more time focusing on those primary sources. While writing, I found myself having to leaf through them more than I wanted, and often struggling to find information that I knew existed, but couldn't remember *where* it was from.

I began with "On the Walls," the scene of Andromache and Hector arguing on the walls of Troy, because it is perhaps one of her most iconic scenes. The moment is written clearly and in detail, which made my job easy - I just had to take what was already in the text and expand on



the parts I considered the most important. I considered this a good warm-up for the rest of the thesis, as it let me get into character without providing too many challenges.

I wrote several of the smaller scenes next, such as the background on Andromache's family ("Burying Thebe") and the death of Hector ("The Fall"). Writing the death of her family took minimal research and gave me plenty of wiggle room to add in my own commentary. The death of Hector was a scene I knew needed to be short. Hector's death is a pivotal moment in the *Iliad*, and I didn't want to waste time retelling it, since this isn't Hector's story but Andromache's.

I also felt it inappropriate to linger on it too long, for Andromache's sake. There is so much one could say, but at the end of the day, she has lost her husband. She knows that along with his death comes the eventual death of her city, too. I could have said more, but I don't think I needed to.

"The Visitor," in which Andromache runs into Aeneas, is a scene I thought would be easy - after all, it was the one that inspired me to do this project in the first place - but ended up struggling with the most. It required a lot of stepping back to do additional research, and showed me how little I knew about the geography Andromache settled down in. Were I writing the entire novel, I might spend a good amount of time delving into that research and writing a chapter about her city with Helenus first, so I had all of that information up my sleeve before placing Aeneas in it. I was focusing on the more plot-based scenes, rather than world-building scenes, so I had to wing this one a little bit.

Andromache tells Aeneas her own story in "Storytelling," which was perhaps my favorite part to write because it gave me an opportunity to flesh out her character. The story she tells and her own inner commentary on it are completely different, which was purposeful. I got to have

fun and give her a moment to shine, just as Aeneas does when he tells his story in the *Aeneid*. But unlike Aeneas, Andromache gets to share how she actually feels about her story.

Then there was a cycle of tidying up, doing some extra research, and more tidying up. The process felt messy at times, but I always allowed myself to write what I wanted to write, rather than forcing myself to work in a specific order or style. I believe choosing to write without a firm outline gave me a lot of freedom in that I learned what parts were most important to me as I went along. When I felt stuck with one section, I would shift over to another and work on my writing there. I found it helpful to jump back and forth between writing that involved more research and writing that called for more creative liberties; in this way, revision never stagnated or made me feel like I was stuck in some rut.

In the future, all there is to do is continue writing. There is still much to write between when Troy falls and when Andromache settles down with Helenus, but because there is so little writing on what happens during that period, it will perhaps be the most time-intensive part to work on. I also plan to flesh out what happens in the later years of Andromache's life to give finality to her story. Finally, I will work in several scenes that occur before the Trojan War to show what her life was like before Hector died and make it clear why his loss (and the events that follow) are so important.

The most challenging aspect of completing this novel, I believe, would be to decide on its order. I decided early on that the story would not be told chronologically, but I'm still not sure exactly how it will play out.

## Discussion

Several months into writing this thesis, I had the realization that I don't actually like writing novels. I was almost afraid to admit this at first because my entire thesis is a novel! But after two classes in creative nonfiction, one of them a flash nonfiction course, I realized that my true interest is in shorter essays. Professor Dalton encouraged me to use this as something to learn from, rather than be held back by. We came to think of this not as a novel but as a series of shorter pieces that came together as a whole. Although it is fiction, not nonfiction as I prefer, I tried to view this as nonfiction in a way: putting myself in Andromache's shoes and writing this for her, just as I'd write an essay for myself.

The research process as it pertains to fiction writing was new to me, as well. Although obviously I'm accustomed to both writing and research, I'd never had to combine the two until now. This was the part I was most nervous about, but I ended up really enjoying the research. Digging deeper into history was always an option when writer's block reared its head, giving me a way to still be productive even if I wasn't actively writing. The information I learned never failed to motivate me, and I had several of my greatest breakthroughs in my writing whenever I learned more about the world I was building the story in. One of those moments was when I learned about Andromache's son Molossus, which allowed me to go off in a direction I had never expected.

My final challenge was attempting to find my own voice while combining it in a meaningful and logical way with the foundational myths and stories. This was especially intimidating because I didn't want to "change" any parts of the story or go against anything past writers have said - no one wants to argue with Virgil! - so I had to follow the texts closely while finding room to include my own interpretation. The lesson learned here was really nothing more

than confidence, which was also fueled by research. Once I felt as though I knew my references front and back, I was more comfortable putting my own spin on them. Reading through works by Madeline Miller and Ursula Le Guin also reminded me that similar projects have been done successfully in the past, and there's nothing wrong with interpreting my references in a way that might not have originally been intended or expected.

I kept several themes in mind while writing, and would intend to thread them in more thoroughly with further development. The main theme is a woman's role in war, focusing on what it is, what the Trojans think it should be, and how Andromache herself feels about it. Loyalty is also a strong theme. Hector is so loyal to Troy that he dies defending it; is that actually a good thing? Andromache also goes on to marry Hector's brother Helenus, another sign of loyalty to Troy. I hope to continue to focus on the conflict and suffering caused by such a strong desire for loyalty.

## **Conclusion**

In the future, the plan is to continue developing this thesis into a complete novel. Several other chapter concepts are detailed in my outline. The goal is to flesh out Andromache's life before the Trojan War to make clear the stakes (why losing Hector matters so much), as well as contrast her past marriage with her later life as she builds a city with Helenus.

I believe that adding to a now growing pool of novels that make classics and mythology modern and accessible to a general populace will aid in furthering interest in ancient literature. If the looks of confusion I receive when explaining my majors to someone are anything to go by, there isn't as much of an understanding or interest in the subject as I wish there would be, and it's often seen as outdated or just plain boring. My target audience is anyone who doesn't see as

much value in classical culture as I do: anyone who has asked me why I choose to study ancient history, or why it matters. I hope to show that it matters through my work, and create one more reason why familiarity with the classics is still beneficial.

## THESIS

### INTRODUCTION

Andromache. “Fighter of men,” they call me. Perhaps my father was trying to be funny; perhaps he knew a little more than others. Maybe a prophecy here and there, a talk or two with an oracle. Perhaps they just wanted another boy, and thought to at least put an ironic spin on their disappointment.

The definition I prefer is “man’s battle.” I have never been one to hide on the sidelines or conceal my opinions. In this war they say my role is weaving. Women’s work. Hours laboring away until the joints in my fingers throb. Everyone has a duty, they say. As much as Hector and the rest might tell me so, I don’t believe it.

My duty is on the walls, watching for what the men are too prideful to notice themselves. My duty is scraping layers of blood and dirt off my husband’s armor in the early hours of the morning and warning him that one day, he won’t come back. It is teaching my son to be kind while the men only wish him to be strong.

I am fighting a battle I am not meant to fight. Courage, a blessing in men, is a flaw in my personality. Truthfully, this *is* man’s battle. There’s nothing I can do to change the wills of men and gods. But I haven’t stopped trying.

Troy has fallen. I have lost my husband, my son. My prized walls I couldn’t ever stand to leave. I continued to live on, which seems to be my curse (I wonder if the oracle told my father *that*). I learned that Troy lives on through small factions of men scattered across the world, and found myself again one day a Trojan of some kind. It’s not the same to me, but it is to them. It is to Hector’s brother, Helenus, who seeks every day to make our city a better model of old Troy.

I am Andromache. Man's battle. I fight in battles meant for men, and fight the battles men can't handle themselves. While men kill each other and themselves, I keep them alive. I keep cities and peoples alive as men fight to tear them apart. I have lost everything else. This is a battle I will not lose.

This is the tale of my suffering that the greatest writers tried and failed to portray. It wasn't Homer's fault; there was only so much of me to share. He gave me a speaking role, at least. Euripides gave it a fair shot. I don't like being portrayed as a helpless sheep caught in the midst of needless conflict, but at least he didn't shy away from painting Pyrrhus and Hermione in their true colors. A little over-dramatized, but he did name the entire thing after me. I can't complain. And I appreciate Virgil most of all for understanding that life was not perfect after I met Helenus. For understanding that sometimes, blood isn't enough. Blood doesn't replace love.

Maybe I'm reading into his words too much. I've had enough time to dissect them through and through, to tear them apart and read them back and forth and upside down. Virgil let me be sad, but he let me have power, too. For some reason, he believed that my story wasn't done being told quite yet, and he carried it on.

Now I'm carrying it on myself. There is power in sadness. In suffering. There is power in knowing one's place. My place is not one I'd willingly force on anyone else, but I do it best I can.

I haven't died a hero's death. I didn't go down with my husband or Troy. In my old age, the writers have forgotten me. They've forgotten to give me an ending. No one wants to read about me fading into old age, anyway. It's not nearly as exciting. Truly, my story started in Troy and ended in Epirus. I did my duty. I fought a man's battle. I paved the way for hundreds of

years of war to follow as my sons upheld our new city. Here is my end and my beginning. It's all I have left.



## ON THE WALLS

The haze of war was thick that day and fogged my vision as I gazed over the walls of Troy. Somewhere under the rolling cloud of dirt in those open fields, men were dying. Men I knew. Men I knew were killing men I didn't know. Past the wall, it was all death out there. Sometimes I would scan the landscape for Hector, as though somehow I could sense him within the throng. Even with his glowing helmet, there was just too much. There were too many men. But looking for him occupied my time, so look I did.

I didn't have to look far that day. I could hear the sound of armor rustling as he approached. Some creaks and moans. Probably rusted in places by blood and gods-know-what-else. I'd spend my evening cleaning it, then. I didn't turn, still thinking he was out somewhere on the battlefield, until he spoke next to me. "Looking for me out there, eh?"

I jumped. If it wasn't for the voice, no one except for me could tell who he was. I could recognize Hector anywhere, under any number of layers of clothing and armor, but he was hardly himself. There was a dent in his breastplate, caused perhaps by a wayward spear. The man who wielded it would be dead, now. Hector smelled heavy of warm blood and sweat.

He was frazzled - although how could he not be, fresh from war but now rushing through the clean air of the city. It was always startling, seeing him here. The grime that dulled the shimmer of his helmet stood out against the pale linens of the women's flowing tunics. I wondered if he began to feel out of place, himself, sometimes. Every time he appeared like this, grimy and coated in that rusty odor, I was ashamed that it didn't shock me more. It became the norm. I'd scrubbed his helmet clean myself a time or two or ten. The reactions of those around us were similar, only shock at his appearance inside the walls, perhaps a kind word or thanks or prayer sent in his direction as he hurried past.

Behind me, my nurse sighed.

“You’re possessed, Hector,” I shouted, struggling to be heard over the roar of battling men even as I clung to his arm. “This war is going to kill you.”

As I knew too well, these words would only rattle around between his skull and helmet before shooting back out somewhere to end up forgotten. “You’re not wrong.” He smirked, though. He found my worry cute.

We stood by the old fig tree, near the walls, farther out than most women went or were even supposed to go. I wandered around edges of the city when I couldn’t focus on my weaving, which was often. I could never multitask like the other women. Hecuba often told me I needed to find a rhythm, a flow, and I did, but my worries broke it apart with a deep thudding bass.

Hecuba planted this tree herself when she married Priam. I used to pluck the figs and eat them straight from the tree, flesh still warm from the sun. There were no more left now, of course, to take as I pleased; rations were tight and the tree had been picked clean weeks ago.

I knew these walls better than most Trojans, better than some of the soldiers, even. Just as I couldn’t think about weaving when I was worried, they couldn’t worry when they were thinking about war, and that left them open to mistakes. I warned Hector that the walls here were too low, with not enough of our men stationed around them. Ajax, Idomeneus, Diomedes, even Menelaus and Agamemnon themselves have tried an attack against this very spot. I saw them all. Agamemnon scared me most of all, with his eyes that seemed to glow from beneath his helmet with a rage that could only be fueled by madness or the gods. Probably both.

The nurse handed Astyanax to me, who squirmed in my arms. “And what about him? If you won’t worry about me, do you worry about him? After you die? What do you think they’ll do to the son of the famous warrior, Hector?” I’d learned to throw some flatteries in from time to

time. They never did anything, of course, but they put him in a better mood, and we believed then that cheerful soldiers were good soldiers.

Hector's eyes only glazed over. He'd heard this a million times over. Part of me worried he'd start to hate me for this badgering, but I didn't let that stop me. And I knew he believed me; I could see it in that grin on his face, a little too wide, eyes a little too big. There was fear in them. And he hated that.

He did share my fears, to some extent. His city and family relied on his existence, and at his death he knew they would crumble into nothing. After he died, the remainder of his world would be abandoned to suffer without him. I envied him in that: he never witnessed the aftermath. While his death would be my reality, my death was beyond him.

He acknowledged that, after conversations just like this one. "One day our city will perish. I know that. But the pain I will feel for the Trojans then -" and he listed them, all, his mother Hecuba and his father Priam, his fifty sisters and fifty brothers (most, already dead by then), "-is nothing to what I will feel for you." He might poke me, then, to let me know that he meant it but was being silly at the same time. He'd said this a thousand times. He had the routine down perfectly. Then he'd reflect, "but let's hope I'll be dead and buried long before I'm forced to hear you cry as they drag you away."

I envied him, but didn't have the chance to ruminate on that feeling for too long today, as the child in my arms began to scream. Hector had extended his hands toward him. Hector, who looked less like himself and more like a metal-encased monster. I liked to tell Astyanax the old myths while I rocked him to sleep at night, of Talos, the giant bronze automaton, and considered that to a small baby this armored Hector couldn't seem much different. I snorted at that, and Hector chuckled too, despite the tension that burned in this humid air. I felt sick, laughing, but I

did it all the same. It felt wrong to laugh, then and there, as our voices mingled with the screaming and the death that echoed outside our walls, but we took any ounce of happiness we could find and held onto it.

Realizing the problem, Hector threw his helmet to the ground, bronze glittering in the sunlight, horse hair combed into a crisp plume, before again reaching for the boy, who was less fearful after he caught sight of his father's smile. Hector kissed his son and, as he swung him through the air, and I couldn't help but think this could be the last time Astyanax sees his father. And then always the thought that followed: this could be the last time *I* see him too. But there was nothing but joy in Hector's eyes as he smiled at his son.

Holding his Astyanax in his arms, he prayed to whomever might listen. "Zeus... all gods, really, let him grow as strong as me, rule as best as I myself could. When he returns from war with spoils, let our men shout that he is better than his father. Let his mother rejoice."

The kinds of things men prayed for in those days. Astyanax was returned to my arms, and Hector shifted a scolding gaze to me. "Now, take a day off from worrying. I'll die when it's my fate to die, and there's nothing you or anyone else can do about that. Go back inside, to your loom."

"But-"

His fingers brushed my cheek, and I felt the imagined stain of the blood of hundreds of Greek men glide across my skin. "I need you to encourage everyone inside to get on with to their jobs. We all have our own in this war. Don't worry yourself about keeping our city defended. That's our job. All of the Trojan men, and mine more than anyone else's."

And so Hector returned to his work. My nurse snatched my child out of my grasp and led me away with her free hand. Demetria. She had lived with my family back in Thebe and raised

me as a child. Only now were grays starting to slip into her hair. Probably the stress of war. As I examined those, she criticized me for the same thing. “Back to the loom, you go. You’re driving yourself crazy out here. It’s not healthy. All that sun and worry, you’re going to age terribly!”

I snorted. “At least I’m still aging. More than you can say for all those men out on the fields.”

She’d pulled me into the inner hallways of the castle by that point, fingers gripping my hand tightly as though she were worried I might run. “Don’t be so negative. They’re protecting us. Protecting you. Protecting -” here, she adjusted Astyanax in her arm, whose head was starting to droop into sleep, “- this little one, and all the little ones who matter most of all.”

I frowned. “I wish they’d just give up. If we surrender, I’m sure they’ll be much kinder to us than if they have to tear down all our walls just to get inside.”

“You think they’d ever be kind to us? You’ve seen how some of those men look. Agamemnon and Achilles especially, ugh.” She shuddered and pulled Astyanax closer to her body as though that could protect him from the dangers we talked about. “They didn’t show any kindness to your family.”

“That’s different. They attacked Thebe because they knew it would hurt us here.”

She shrugged. “You don’t think they’re set on pure destruction? I don’t know, they don’t seem very merciful to me.”

“At least surrendering gives them the option of mercy. As it stands now, they’ve got no option other than to give up and turn around or fight until they kill all of us.”

“Have some faith in Hector. And the gods, too. We can’t be certain they’ll kill all of us. Maybe tomorrow one of them will offend Zeus or something and get the whole army wiped out. Or at least a girl can dream.”

Astyanax was becoming restless; he never liked to be held very long, and we'd been hustling all across the city with him today. Demetria rambled over her shoulder as she hustled off. "You sit tight here for just a little. I'll get him settled in and then draw you a bath. I found some lavender hidden away in a spare dresser, now, don't you tell anyone! You'll smell lovely for Hector when he returns."

Her voice grew louder and louder as she hurried away down the hall, leaving me alone. The chamber she'd led me to was too dark for me. Oppressively dark. Women sat whispering to each other, as if speaking loudly would curse them somehow. Incense burned and made me cough, filling the air with a thick haze that slithered out through the sides of the door. This was women's work, I thought, walking in and settling down beside my loom. Staying out of everyone else's way.

## BURYING THEBE

Watching the rest of the world move on from those walls, while life inside paused for so many years, gave me a strange comfort. At its worst, Troy was a graveyard in the making. At its best, Troy was a sanctuary from the death the Greeks brought upon the miles of defenseless farmland that surrounded our secure walls. If not for my marriage, I would have suffered the fate of my family. In the Achaeans' thirst to wound Troy in every possible way, they tore apart my city like it was made of straw.

Achilles himself murdered my father. Was that an honorable death, to at least die at the hands of the greatest warrior to ever live? Honor and respect were heavy on these men's minds, or at least they tried to make it seem so. Achilles set my father's body aflame while he was still in the armor that so miserably failed to save his life. What is armor against Achilles? Against a monster? Nothing but a sign of honor that even a brute had the decency to respect. Achilles, above all others, respected honor.

I stood firm that my father died a good death. It was quick - isn't that all you can ask of death, to be quick? - and his body was treated fairly. Spirit women of the mountains planted elm trees around his corpse and created life from his death. My mother suffered most, as is the fate of most women of war. Achilles dragged her away as his prisoner and set her free with a hefty price of ransom on her head. Her death would have been slow and dark. Thus, Thebe fell.

My marriage saved me from this death. Left with my family, I would have died like my mother, in fear and shame, after watching Achilles cut down my seven brothers before me first. He would have killed them in front of the women, if he could, I'm sure. Somewhere he'd know we were watching. It wasn't about the death itself, but about inciting hopelessness in those still alive.

I never had much hope in the war to begin with. I can't say I was surprised when the news rang out that my family was dead. Not even surprise when I heard the Achaeans were seen headed in Thebe's direction. I remember the image of my father's armor, unworn since before my birth, that he displayed openly in our home when I was a child. My brothers would rub the metal with their thumbs as they walked by, watch their forms grow in its glimmering reflection over the years, and plead to our parents - *when are we getting our own? When will we fight too?* They were jealous of it, of course. But now it is rusting under the earth.



## THE FALL

I was at the loom when I felt it.

The cloth was pale, a single color; there was not much room left for luxurious designs anymore. The sides of my thumbs had rubbed raw from the repetition - over, under, over, under. My work was uneven.

I had complained to someone earlier that day about how Hector always ran through the city in his dirty armor, with that blood always caked on, and how he couldn't think to take it off closer to the walls. He'd always rush to hug me and stain my clothes. I pulled aside a maid to start a bath. He'd be dirty when he got back, as he always was. I'd tell him I wouldn't kiss him until he was clean. I'd tell him how I couldn't kiss him while he glowed in the armor of the man he had killed.

And then I heard Hecuba's screams, and I knew. It shook inside my bones. Even buried within the prison of this castle, away from the wall, I knew. It could be nothing else.

Hector had fallen.

Troy had fallen.

And so the women mourned.

## THE VISITOR

We'd heard rumors for weeks - maybe months - so I was not surprised when Aeneas and his crew appeared at Epirus that day. They'd been spotted skirting the shores for days, and news usually traveled to our town quickly. It was shocking how fast information could reach us when we weren't under siege. I sent messengers to keep tabs on their movement, and asked our merchants who traveled to larger towns to bring back any knowledge they could.

As a result, I was prepared when Aeneas stumbled into the grove I'd strategically placed myself in that morning. Molossus was in the fields playing with his dog, a hulking mastiff that weighed more than he did. He was currently training it to herd our flocks, to little success (unless told by him, in which case he practically had the herd eating out of his hands). I'd prepared my yearly offerings of mourning, and done my own mourning over the tomb I built for Hector when we arrived. It was now grown over with a thick layer of grass. There I waited. The grove was open and visible, directly on the main path to our city. There would be no missing it.

Aeneas spotted me first. I thought... I'm not sure what I thought. I'd be happy to see him? Would it be bittersweet? A warm reunion? I'm not sure what I could have expected but when I saw him my vision went blurry.

The men had surrounded me by the time I caught my bearings. "Aeneas, is that really you?" I whispered. The wind was soft that day and they could still hear me in this quiet, sacred grove. He looked like a ghost, haggard and dirty from travel; his men were similarly gaunt, each covered in their fair share of wounds and scars. Aeneas had always looked youthful back at Troy. Clean. War never destroyed his body like it did the other men. But now his face was tanned and scarred. There were wrinkles between his eyebrows that had not been there before. His eyes were

sunk into his head and when he looked at me it almost felt as though he were looking through me, looking in the distance for something he wished he could find.

I could imagine the crowd of Trojan warriors parting, their ethereal figures drifting as though pushed aside by the breeze, and from a path between them might emerge my Hector, rushing through them to greet me once more. He would fall to his knees and kiss my hands, first, before sweeping me into a bear hug.

It would be an illusion, it would not be him - but it would. Part of him. The part that hangs on after death. I don't know what he would do. Sit rapt and listen, eyes wide, as I told him what I had endured since his death. Maybe he'd beg me to join him in death. No, that wouldn't be Hector. That wouldn't be honorable, not in his mind.

Aeneas, perhaps noticing my eyes glaze over, interrupted my daydream. "Yes, it's me. Flesh and blood." I didn't know whether to be pleased or heartbroken. I would not be seeing Hector today. But, Aeneas was something. Some little glimmer of the past. It would have to do. And there I was, crying again.

Aeneas was crying, too, but trying to cover it up. The way men hold in their tears. Women keep talking until it turns to gasps and they can't speak through the emotion anymore, but men grit their teeth and push through. I wonder if he felt the same seeing me as I did seeing him. We were both ghosts to each other, ghosts of a past we couldn't escape.

Finally, he found words. "What... what's happened to you? Since you lost Hector, we assumed the worst. We heard about -" the name we all dreaded speaking, "Pyrrhus."

I shook my head, glancing down toward the spot where I honored my dead husband. The first one. "No, he's dead now. He kept me for far too long. As a slave, more than a wife." My breathing started to slow down as I found the story, trying to give them what they needed to

know without any of the woe-is-me ramblings. “Hermione.” Hermione - daughter of Helen. More mortal than her mother, but still coated in that glimmer of godlike beauty that was both mystifying and intimidating. She’d been promised to him during the war, anyway. If she’d been less stuck up - to be frank, if she hadn’t despised me for “stealing her husband,” as she called it - I might have warned her of his cruelties.

But cruel men never lived very long. Maybe that’s why Aeneas was still alive. He always had gentle charm. Not a cruel bone in his body. He was never meant to fight in Troy; his warmth and kindness were meant for greater things. I once thought, optimistically, that perhaps Hector’s warmth and kindness were meant for greater things too, but I should have known better. He never had the backing of the gods that Aeneas did. Just a plain old mortal in over his head.

We continued to exchange pleasantries for some time, in a little magic bubble of awe that we were reunited. Aeneas was quick to pull my story out of me, what had become of me since the last time we met. I was trying to pull questions out of him in turn when we were interrupted by the appearance of my husband.

If they were pleased to see me, I can’t imagine how excited they were to see Helenus. He drew them toward the city with booming words, already inciting laughter in the men. He was using that special gift of his that put others at ease, even in this bittersweet reunion.

The men gazed up at the walls with wide, hungry eyes as we entered through the front gates. As we showed them around, I suddenly felt a pride in our city that I had not before - a pride that overtook my shame and disappointment in this feeble attempt at recreating our destroyed home. When I walked about it, I only saw the differences; how the walls were not so thick here, how the buildings were not so well-constructed, stuck together hurriedly with whatever we could find. Stones and clay and wood and mud. Troy had taken years to fully own

its glory, buildings pressing and expanding out over time as people flocked to join the safety of its lands. Years for buildings to burn down and better ones to be put up in their place. Years of families and children and grandchildren, and the marriages between them all, to build not only the city but community of Troy.

Most days, when I saw our city, I saw not the similarities to Troy, but the absence of all of that above and more. I saw this ruse we were creating, this lie to ourselves that we could perhaps find normalcy again, find Troy again. This was not Troy, though. Troy was now buried under ash and rubble.

But Aeneas and his crew, starved for home, saw not the flaws I saw but all they'd missed the most. They saw the fig tree near the gates, planted when I married Helenus, a thin twig of a representation of Hecuba's own ancient tree. They saw the two of us, and as I looked at them wandering through our little city, I felt for a moment as though I were back home. We would round a corner and find Hector strolling towards us. Families we once knew might wander by, their children staring up at the soldiers with wide eyes.

Like children, Aeneas and his men stared up with glee at this memory of home. I glanced over at Helenus and the mirage was broken - I was again back in Epirus - but saw that the men were still lost in these reminders of the past. Aeneas could not stop complimenting our city as we brought him through the colonnades into the center hall. Together we poured libations and sat to eat. Helenus arranged to bring out our finest dining ware.

As we worked through our meals, voices filled the hall. Aeneas' men conversed amongst themselves and with our own people. This reunion was well-needed, for them and for us. I could see his men brightening up a little throughout the day, eyes a little more hopeful, steps a little less heavy. Aeneas never changed, always wearing a thick mask of optimism and joy.

Helenus whispered something in Aeneas' ear, and Aeneas nodded his head with a slight smile. "No, no, I don't mind," I heard him respond. Helenus rang a fork against his wineglass.

Aeneas stood from his seat and threw his arms into the air. "I'm sure you all want to hear what has befallen us since we left Troy... except my own men, who have heard this story more times than they'd probably like! Hell, they've lived the story themselves." He turned to me. "Andromache, I'll tell you our story if you tell us yours."

I was not used to so many eyes on me at once. I was the woman in the background who kept the city afloat without anyone noticing my actions. Most did not care to know my story. Everyone's story was the same in some way or another. Suffering here, suffering there. "Why not Helenus' tale?" I said, voice cracking for a second before I cleared my throat. "I've heard it myself. It's far more interesting than mine."

"Why not both?"

I glanced at Helenus, who shrugged and sighed before speaking. "Fine, although I promise my own tale is not nearly as riveting as I'm sure yours is, Aeneas."

Aeneas nodded, and then he spoke.

I wondered how many times he'd told his story, or different versions of it. Certain bits sounded almost rehearsed and I couldn't tell if that was from the numerous recitations he'd done to earn sympathy at various towns, or if because he replayed those scenes over and over in his head at night. The image of his wife, more dead than alive, how as he tried to hug her one last time she faded away. The image of those who survived, and their faces as they stared back upon their city and families dying in the carnage behind them. I'm sure he mulled over the words late at night, grinding his teeth as though he were chewing them apart, figuring out how he could explain what he'd seen. How to explain them in a way that didn't bring tears to his eyes.

I didn't know if that's what Aeneas did, but that's what I did. The story he asked of me, I knew by heart, word for word. I could make an epic from it. But Aeneas' tale was the epic our people would want to listen to, not mine.

For a moment, after his voice fell silent, exhaustion flickered in his eyes. Heavy and gray. Not lack of sleep, not physical. Pure exhaustion. Perhaps from recalling his suffering once again, a collective exhaustion of all his men and all the lives lost compiled into one expression that fluttered away from his face as quickly as it came. He caught my gaze and smiled. He had told his story, and I would tell mine.

## STORYTELLING

“Our story is the same up till Hector’s death.” The room felt darker after Aeneas’ tale, the candles running low, everyone inching closer to the head of the table to hear. He had pulled them in. Now it was my turn to keep them entertained.

Hector’s death was the turning point. The death that united all of us even as it sent our city and its people spiraling away to hell or worse. “Then we had a few days to wait before we’d lose the war. I hated those days more than anything, just knowing what would come.

“When they attacked, it was a blur. I don’t remember much.” A lie. I watched from the walls as the horse rolled in. A young boy dressed in soldier’s clothes, blond hair dripping a little sweat down his forehead, found me by the wall to tell me what was happening, but of course I’d figured it out by that point.

Of the part that stood out most, I said the least. “Astyanax did not survive the attack.” What could I say? That the image of his death haunted my dreams every night, woke me up sobbing so loud it could wake half the city? That every time I closed my eyes, I heard his soft crying as he was ripped from my arms, heard that crying turn to screams and then silence? How Pyrrhus wrapped his fingers around me before I could ever bury his body?

No. I couldn’t trouble them with those thoughts, especially not Aeneas. A man with a son himself. I prayed he’d never even have to think about such a horrible end to his own child. I prayed he never had to see his baby clutched by his small fingers, the ones Hector and I once kissed and counted in the early mornings, like he was a toy. But he was a toy to Pyrrhus, simply a means to break me.

Another Greek had restrained my hands behind my back as we stood upon the highest tower of my palace. I remembered him making some joke, wondering if the fall be enough to kill



him. Pyrrhus, all business, responded that if not, the fires would. The other man chuckled, and Pyrrhus let go.

“I was lucky to live,” I continued. “Most of the other women in the palace met worse fates than mine.” A lie. Perhaps not a full lie, as I didn’t ever know what happened to any of the other women, but it felt like one to me. I would have rather been thrown from that wall too than have to suffer through Pyrrhus’ monstrous whims.

“Pyrrhus took me as his war prize, as if destroying Troy wasn’t enough. Apparently living, breathing women are a respectable award for bravery, if that’s what you can call it. He took me to Phthia. It was beautiful, there. Sometimes I could feel the presence of Thetis along the coasts in the mists that rose up from the sea. It was warm and oppressive. I felt as though we had something in common, Thetis and I. She too had been captured by a man she did not want and forced to sleep with him. But then her grandson was my captor.

“And then I had a son.” I glanced over at him, then, eating quietly beside Helenus. He had always been silent, even as a baby; I hardly remembered hearing him cry except for his birth itself. Aeneas and his men followed my gaze. “Molossus.”

This was the part I would struggle with the most. Molossus was our child; Helenus accepted him as his own without a second thought. He was a son of Troy and that was that. But it still hurt to remember what he was a result of. It hurt to remember that his name would forever be attached to that of the man who killed my other son. To see the hint of red in his brown hair when the sun shined through it, a faint reminder of his father’s own flaming locks.

That was the stigma, more than anything else: Molossus, son of Pyrrhus. Son of Achilles, murderer of Hector. I felt as though I were living in a myth, like the ones with curses that

spanned generations of families. Some would inevitably complain that he was the blood of our enemies, and would only bring suffering to our family.

I feared someone would try to kill him, eventually. But we made it clear that he was our family, and our people respected us. I just hoped they would respect him once we died, and see him as more than a reminder of why we fled here in the first place.

In my pause, Aeneas spoke, his bright eyes giving away the optimism the rest of his face was trying to disguise. “Do you mean to say... he’s Hector’s child?”

“No.” The din of silverware scraping against plates halted. “He is mine.” Aeneas looked away. Glancing at Helenus, I rewound. “He is ours. He will be the first of many kings. The gods have declared it, and anyone who disagrees can take it up with them.” I would never call that man, Pyrrhus, his father.

“Anyway,” I continued, and the tight air loosened as the men exhaled once again, “those were... unhappy times. I feared for myself, of course, but then with a child into the mix - I couldn’t let him be hurt too.

“Hermione never liked me, either. I doubt many women like their husbands’ concubines. She’d never had a child with him, so I think that when she saw that I had a child by him, something snapped inside her. She accused me of poisoning her, saying that was the reason she was barren. I thought she was going to kill me. Pyrrhus was off in Delphi, so there was nothing standing in her way.

“I sent Molossus off, secretly, and hid in the temple of Thetis. Somehow they found him though. Menelaus did. Hermione had told me she would find a way to get me out of the temple. Menelaus threatened to kill Molossus if I didn’t leave the temple and offer up my own life.

“Of course I did. I’d try anything to save him. I argued with Menelaus but his daughter had a strong grip on him and there was nothing I could do to sway him. And it was a trick, anyway. He dragged us off to kill us both.”

The story read like a play. It sounded ridiculous as I spoke it out loud. “I was saved by Peleus. Menelaus didn’t have any right to kill me, since I wasn’t his property, and Peleus was just defending the property of his grandson.” *Property*. I hated the word. But that’s all they saw me as.

“Peleus was kind to me, and let me wait in peace for Pyrrhus to return. But he never did. Murdered at Delphi, I heard. I didn’t really need to know more. Peleus let me go. He told me that my son and I had a fate to fulfill. Here we are fulfilling it, I hope.”

## PROSPECTIVE SCENE TWO DRAFT

Background: “Prospective Scene Two” in outline.

Once I got used to it, Troy wasn’t so different from home. It was closer to the water, which my brothers and I had always loved playing in as children. Although I hadn’t yet come to know many of the people here yet, they knew of me, and always seemed overjoyed to run into me throughout the city. It was clear from our interactions that the people of Troy held Hector in high respect, and therefore gifted the same respect to me as an extension of him.

For the first time, I wasn’t the only young woman of the house. I’d been eager to see if the rumor of King Priam’s fifty sons and fifty daughters was accurate. The family rarely met as a whole for meals, but when they did the entire main chamber was filled with young men and women of all ages. I couldn’t tell which women were related and which were wives of all the sons, but they quickly took me in.

They taught me that I didn’t despise weaving, as I’d grown up to believe. As a child, it’d been only me and my mother. She didn’t like to talk when she worked, and I found it incredibly boring. Here the women had wine. They’d take turns playing instruments. They chatted and laughed and shared what tidbits of news they’d picked up throughout their day. It was less a chore and more... fun. I found that weaving wasn’t quite as boring when you had other things to distract you from the task.

I found myself weaving often, often dragged there by a few of Priam’s daughters I’d picked up as friends (or, who had picked me up). One was Medesicaste; she was the one who made it obvious how “fifty sons and fifty daughters” might actually be possible. Her hooked nose, thin lips, and tight blonde curls set her aside from the daughters of Hecuba with their

smooth features and shining auburn hair. She wasn't fully an outcast, although she was rarely seen in a room together with Hecuba.

In one of my first weeks here she invited me on a trip to the beach with some of the other women. They had a "secret" spot, she called it, one where the water was warmer than anywhere else and the wind wasn't quite so strong. On a day it was so warm everyone else was cooping up inside, we covered our heads and wrapped ourselves in long skirts to protect our skin from the heat and scurried out of the city.

I'd never had freedom like this before. In Thebe someone was always sticking me with my brothers when they didn't know what else to do with me, or forcing me to stay inside when my brothers were actually off doing something I might find interesting. The group was led by Iliona, the oldest daughter of Hecuba, and Creusa, Aeneas' wife. I had only ever seen her as a pair with Aeneas; I enjoyed seeing them all separate from their men. They behaved just a little differently, not quite so polished or proud. As great as Hector was, I was trying hard to make sure I was seen as more than just a "pair." Heaven forbid I go down in history unnamed, only to be known as "Hector's wife."

On the beach I dug my bare toes deep into the burning sand until they reached the cold, damp layer. Fluffy gray clouds meandered across the ocean miles away. A wet breeze moistened my skin and I watched as Creusa and one of her friends lathered their already-dark skin with oil.

Once we'd mostly settled down, Medesicaste trotted over with a basket she'd filled with food and wine. [here, in a future draft, would include research about the food of Troy, specifically in comparison to that in Thebe. I have had trouble finding much information about Thebe so far but I'd love to include more details not just about Troy, but what makes Troy *different* from Andromache's home].

[Perhaps more here?]

Back home that night, Hector pointed out the sunburn on my nose the second he saw me. I was in bed early, tired in the way a long day under the sun always makes a person. The burn was already starting to sting. “I’m shocked you didn’t just completely melt out there. It’s disgusting outside.”

“Not so bad if you go in the water,” I said.

“That didn’t seem to protect your poor nose.”

I shrugged. Maybe it’d turn into a nice tan. I was just pale enough that it set me apart from everyone else here. “It was worth it.”

“I’ll get some ice for it. Maybe a cream or something. Do you know what cream they use for sunburns? I guess I can ask Demetria.”

“No, leave her alone! She’s probably asleep. My nose is fine.”

He pulled a serious face. “Well, listen. You’re one of the only women in the city spoiled enough to deserve ice for her sunburned face. You know, other people in the city would kill just to look at a block of ice right now. So take that, and we’ll ask Demetria tomorrow.”

I grumbled and he walked off. The storm we’d seen in the distance over the water today was moving inland, and I could hear faint thunder; at least it’d be cooling down a little soon. Right now my whole body was pleasantly warm, like the sun’s heat was lingering on my skin. Closing my eyes, I imagined the taste of grapes from earlier today on my tongue again, cool and sometimes mixed with gritty beads of sand that somehow made their way into my mouth.

Then I was awakened by the soft “plmph” of a wet, heavy rag on my face, and the bed creaked as Hector sat down beside me. “Don’t tell anyone I took these.”

“Thanks.” I pulled a shard of ice from the rag and placed it in his hand, sitting up. “I actually got caught stealing ice once as a kid. My father was so excited to have it for some visitors that were stopping by in the middle of the summer -- I can’t even remember who they were or why they were so important. But I snuck into where they were storing it with a hammer and broke off some shards to eat. He’d just been bragging about it so much and it was so hot out.” I slipped a piece of the ice into my mouth.

Hector laughed and did the same. “How’d they catch you?”

“Oh, I walked out with ice melting in my hands. I didn’t really think it through.”

“Cute.” He wiped a bead of water off his finger on my cheek. “I’m glad you’re getting comfortable here.”

“I like it. Everyone’s nice to me.”

“They want you to feel at home.”

I thought back to the olives and [insert food here] of before, just slightly off from the flavors back in Thebe. I didn’t mind the difference so much. “I’m grateful. It’s just... beautiful here. Everything is a little different than back home, but not in a bad way. It all feels comforting.”

“Good. That’s the goal.”

I smiled. This was going to be a wonderful city to call home.

## APPENDIX I: OUTLINE

### **Introduction**

This scene introduces Andromache's character.

### **On the Walls**

Andromache meets Hector within the city. Here I include their conversation from the *Iliad*, book 6.

### **Burying Thebe**

This scene details the downfall of Andromache's home city, Thebe.

### **The Fall**

I cover the death of Hector.

### **Prospective Scene One**

This scene will focus on Andromache's marriage to Hector. It will detail her feelings about the relationship as it begins. As I will touch on her thoughts on Troy in a different scene, I won't pull them in too much here. I plan to set it up as a foil for "The Fall" and jumping directly from Hector's death to the beginning of their marriage. It will mainly focus on their relationship with themes of happiness and loyalty. Some questions I will ask myself before writing are:

- Did she immediately love him?
- How did she fall in love with him? Why?



Sources: Sappho, hints from throughout the *Iliad* (will have to do a little bit of patchwork and probably find bits of things in every source possible, as well as fill in the blanks with my own conjecture)

### **The Visitor**

Aeneas arrives and meets with Andromache in Epirus.

### **Storytelling**

Andromache shares her story with Aeneas.

### **Prospective Scene Two**

This scene will probably be set sometime shortly after Andromache's marriage to Hector, when she has settled into Troy. This is where I'll go in-depth on setting to make it clear exactly what is lost to her when Troy falls.

Sources: Leaf, Walter. *Troy; a Study in Homeric Geography*. London: Macmillan, 1912. Print.; Blegen, Carl W. (Carl William). *Troy and the Trojans*. New York: Praeger, 1963. Print.

### **Prospective Scene Three (final chapter in novel)**

This scene will pull from the last book of the *Iliad*. It will reflect on what will happen to Andromache now that her husband is dead. She doesn't just suffer now because of this loss but because she knows her future is now destroyed and hopeless (she will go into slavery, her son

will be killed, etc.). I plan to make this poignant, because past scenes will have already displayed the suffering she is destined to endure.

Sources: Final book of *Iliad*.

**Other possible prospective scenes:**

- Meeting Helenus and building the city
- One in-depth scene from Euripides' *Andromache* to highlight the suffering Andromache went through while with Pyrrhus.

**Climax:**

The climax of the novel will occur when Andromache marries Helenus. This will cover her accepting that her past with Hector is truly over, and setting aside love in order to value loyalty to Troy as something more important.

## APPENDIX II: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Atwood, Margaret. *The Penelopiad*. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2006.

This is the only retelling of a classical story that I didn't enjoy. It is snarky and takes a more modern and feminist spin than the others, placing Penelope in the underworld where she reflects with a modern lens, which is perhaps why I didn't connect so much. Although I believe feminism should play a role in our analysis of these stories, I'm choosing to keep the context of the time period in mind while I write, and making sure to remember that our modern feminist lens doesn't always match up with these stories. In fact, focusing too heavily on that lens may even obscure or weaken elements that should be emphasized. This might work in a text whose narrator is up to date with the present as well as past, but as I'm staying entirely in the past, I will leave everything in its original context.

Euripides. *Andromache*. Trans. Michael Lloyd. 2nd ed. Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, 2005. Print.

This text has been useful in providing background on Andromache's experience while under the control of Neoptolemus. It also made me aware that Andromache has a son of Neoptolemus named Molossus. Although I found *The Penelopiad* a little *too* modernized, *Andromache* showed me that I could feel just as strongly about something in the other direction as well. I found the text so antiquated and offensive towards women (Andromache spends way too much time whining about how miserable it is to be a woman) that I could hardly get through it. I learned that there's a balance I want to strike

in my own writing between being faithful to the ancient texts while also making my characters more than just helpless victims.

Homer. *Iliad*. Trans. Stanley Lombardo. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997. Print.

I used the *Iliad* as a primary source. I relied most heavily on book six, which includes the famous conversation between Hector and Andromache. In the future I plan to work in moments from book 24 as well.

Le Guin, Ursula K. *Lavinia*. Orlando: First Mariner Books, 2009.

*Lavinia* gives voice to Aeneas' wife Lavinia, who is only mentioned briefly in the *Aeneid*. I enjoyed the narrative tone and how it ties in Virgil and the original story - almost the narrator's reclaiming of her own tale through a conversation with it. The writing itself is powerful; Le Guin creates a setting that feels lifelike and effortless, creating an incredibly immersive backdrop for the story she places into it.

Miller, Madeline. *Circe*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2018.

*Circe* is another novel that gives modern insight into the story of a historical character. Much as I intended to do with Andromache, Miller takes a new perspective when giving a voice to Circe. Traditionally seen as a witch, villain, or antagonist, Miller builds a female character that is easy to empathize with, even with - and perhaps because of - her flaws.

Miller, Madeline. *Song of Achilles*. New York: HarperCollins, 2012.

Miller breathes life into the long-debated relationship between Achilles and Patroclus.

This is the first recent retelling of a classical story that I've read, and it offers a lot of inspiration and insight into how we can retell these stories in a modern and compelling manner while still honoring the original tales.

Virgil. *Aeneid*. Trans. Robert Fagles. New York: Penguin Classics, 2010.

Book three serves as a primary source that offers background into Andromache's life after she builds a city with Helenus.